

Past is Prologue

Numismagram Newsletter #21 (V/2019)

This past month, much of the world watched in shock and solemnity over the inferno which raged at the Notre-Dame Cathedral in Paris. An iconic symbol of the Parisian skyline and immense tourist attraction, the edifice's roof seemed to become ablaze virtually out of nowhere, leading to the complete immolation and collapse of the cathedral's spire as the fire raged on. In the end, the entire roof was brought down, the centuries old wooden beams yielding to the power of fire, while a near disaster within the two main towers was narrowly avoided. Pledges from around the world immediately began to pour in, with French president Emmanuel Macron vowing that Notre-Dame shall be rebuilt.



Many were left to wonder how a tragedy of this magnitude could occur in such a venerated and cultivated cultural treasure. The fact is, cathedral fires are actually fairly common, as is their eventual rebuild. In many ways, the medieval churches throughout Europe have gone under seemingly constant phases of construction, destruction, and rebuilding. Notre-Dame herself underwent much damage and desecration during the French Revolution when her interior was secularized—her icons being destroyed and her statues of biblical kings, thought to be French kings, were all beheaded. Only Napoleon's rise to power brought with it a renewed interest in the upkeep of the cathedral. Elsewhere, many of Notre-Dame's contemporaries endured similar fates throughout their histories—falling into the hands of a hostile party and/or succumbing to the ravages of fire.

The Cathedral in Chartres, viewed as a high point in French Gothic art and architecture, suffered numerous set backs in her earlier history, the present structure being the latest in a long line of destroyed edifices. A similar fire struck Chartres herself in 1836, captured in this painting by François-Alexandre Pernot and eerily similar to what we just witnessed...

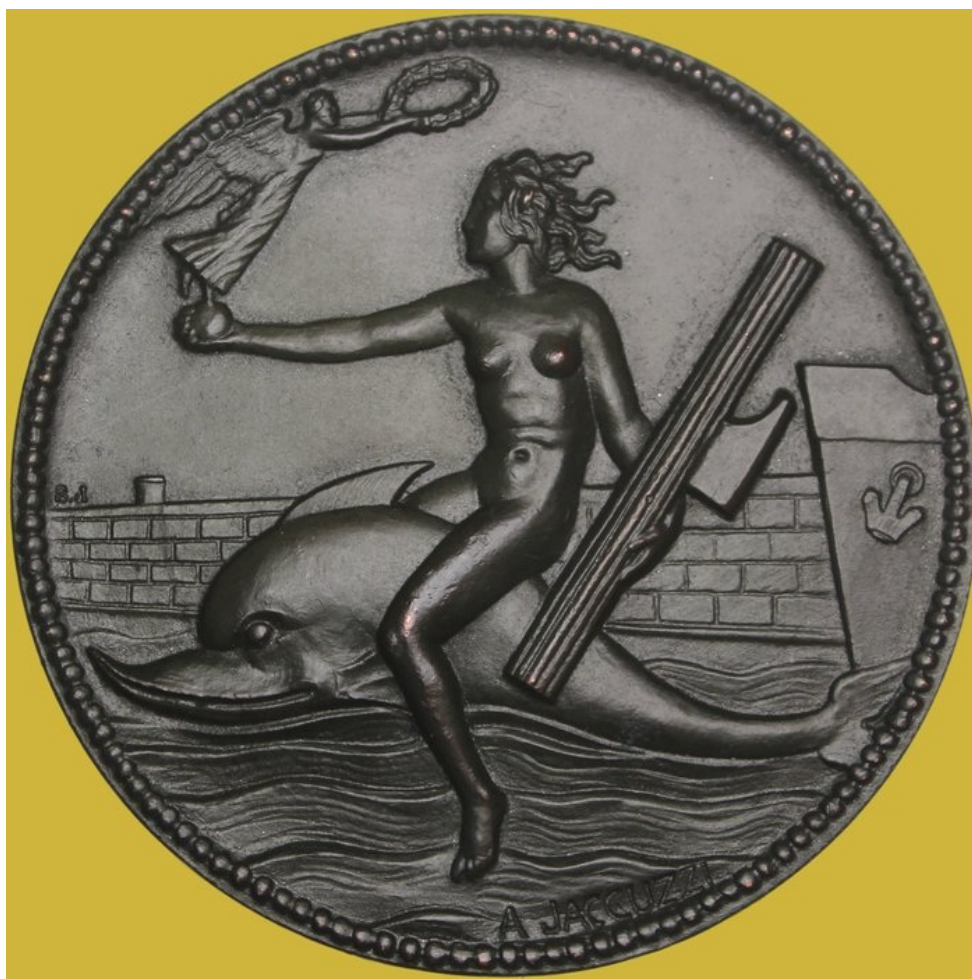


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Turning to a much lighter subject, the temperatures have begun to rise and time in the pool is drawing ever closer. Though some parts of United States are still seeing the brutal reminders of winter, spring has officially sprung and, at least here in Northern California, fun in the sun is almost here. Afternoons in the water become desirable, along with drifting aimlessly atop the floating device of your choosing. Though these can take many shapes and colors, the ones which feature animals are always the best. After all, who doesn't love spending a lazy Saturday astride an inflatable dolphin...?



Though this pic is from a few years ago, I couldn't help but be reminded of it when coming across the following medal, also featuring a figure astride a dolphin (unlikely that *it* was inflated).



(https://shoutout.wix.com/so/41Mfde6lD/c?w=4uHhWFhLKC_3OtMT_2Zrer6F7bp0bw-c41_OjLwpau8.eyJ1ljoiaHR0cDovL251bWlzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9wcm9kdWN0LXBhZ2UvMTAwNjEzli)

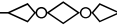
Issued to commemorate the opening of the *Riva dell'Impero* (Imperial Shores) of Venice in 1937, the design, despite its Fascist overtones, is highly classical in its construction, and, even more than me atop an inflated dolphin, draws similarities to the ancient coinage of Tarentum in Italy, which displayed her mythical founder on the obverses of many of her coins...



Rounding out this upload, we have some more highly attractive silver World War I medals, a few more Wiener architectural types, and a small handful of medallic art with nudes as the primary motif...



(https://shoutout.wix.com/so/41Mfde6ID/c?w=TDtEHyH2d_hiQ_CKC4mtLcS3vptMjODiswAoOcN-39Q.eyJ1IjoiaHR0cDovL251bWlzbWFncmFtLmNvbS9pbmZlbnRvcnkjLCJyIjoieZGQzYWVzNzYtMDImMGM)



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